

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
ECONOMIC and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT and ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2009

6:00 P.M.

ATTENDANCE: Council members: dePara; co-chair, Curwen; co-chair, Brantley, Blunt, A. Ayala, Martinez

OTHERS: Council member: Brannelly, Holloway, M. McCarthy, Lyons

Co-chair dePara the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

He announced that the agenda would be taken out of order, beginning with the following items:

Approval of Committee Minutes of October 15, 2009 (Special Meeting).

Approval of Committee Minutes of October 27, 2009.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN MOVED TO CONSOLIDATE AND APPROVE THE MINUTES**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

21-09 Resolution to support the relocation of Ferry service

Co-chair dePara stated that Council members Holloway and Baker would both address this item.

Council member Holloway began and stated that they submitted a resolution, based on the committee's approval of the RFP and they didn't want to overlook the resolution as the proper format. He gave some background information regarding the item and recalled that back in July, he conducted a survey surrounding the entire area of the ferry dock. He found that when cars and passengers depart to access I-95 north or south, the distance between the two directions was eight-tenths of a mile. And from the intersection of Lafayette Blvd. to the southbound lane it's 1.2 miles. He further

mentioned that when there is an event at the Arena Harbor Yard, there is bottleneck congestion. He also conducted a 10:30 a.m. And 11:30 a.m. count of the vehicles that exit the boat. For the 10:30 a.m. count he calculated that the cars went towards the southbound lane and very limited foot traffic; and for the 11:30 a.m. count, people exiting the boat went towards the south or north bound lanes.

He went on to talk about economic development for the downtown area and he emphasized that the part that he disagreed with, was that they needed to look at other areas in the city for this project. He noted that the committee approved the project to have stores etc. He relayed that there is direct on and off access from Seaview Avenue and Stratford Avenue to I-95, noting that it's a big difference distance wise. He stressed that it was the committee's option to pass the resolution or not, but he thought that if the committee passed something for economic development, then he felt they should pass the resolution.

Council member Brantley asked him to explain what was meant by his statement that they could pass the resolution or not. Council member Holloway clarified that it was the committee's option to support the resolution or not, although the committee doesn't have the ultimate approval. He further stated that the project would have to go through the zoning procedure and other departmental approvals.

Council member dePara recognized Attorney Rizio to address the committee. Attorney Rizio said the project will require Bridgeport Port Authority and Harbor Management approvals; then the Planning & Zoning Commission will make the decision whether or not a special permit use is required. If it's approved, then the matter will go through the DEP for the permit process. However, the primary commission that controls the project is the P&Z Commission.

Council member Baker explained that they were before the committee tonight to receive input and support from the city council. He noted that this matter should be a collaborative effort to help Bridgeport grow. He said he realized that there were a lot of concerns and because it's a private company taking on the project, the ferry boat operation would like to grow. He referred to the handout he distributed that included photos to show different specifications; inclusive of the floor plan, parking etc.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN MOVED TO ENTER THE HANDOUT AS EXHIBIT-1 ITEM 21-09 INTO THE RECORD**
**** COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Council member Baker continued and explained that the handout denoted the flow of traffic and parking, *per page 2 of the handout*. He noted that they will have sufficient security. He also pointed out that per the diagram contained in the handout, the plan was designed to allow easier flow for cars to line up and not interfere with passengers dropping off. He referenced the next page of the handout that showed the state-of-art design that will be visually pleasing, consisting of glass material etc. He expressed that it was a beautiful design that people will find appealing when they visit the Bridgeport area. The underpass will accommodate buses and tractor trailers. He stated that there was also a time frame for moving the facility over, which will cut down ferry travel by 15-minutes. He highlighted the concern of taking away from downtown access to the ferry, but he pointed out that currently, people often get lost trying to find their way to the highway.

Overall, it thought it was a good idea to move the ferry for more convenient access. He mentioned other cities that has experienced continued ferry flow through changes made, so he didn't feel it's the ferry boat responsibility, but more a matter of the downtown services that can move the ferry boat forward. He said there was also a question of how to get people to Pleasure Beach and it was discussed that water taxis may be available - *per the CT Community Boating Club* who has shown an interest in utilizing the ferry. He stressed that it won't be the end of the world to move the ferry boat. He also thought that they should keep an open mind and continue to grow. He reiterated that the city council as a whole should work together to make this endeavor work, which will generate more business and bring life to the east end.

Council member Holloway said he spoke to the administration in July. They indicated that they didn't necessarily care where the ferry goes, as long as it's accessible to the needs of the community.

Council member Curwen stated that he has been involved with the ferry boat people for a couple of years. He noted that the proposal has the support of the east end NRZ and it fits into the master plan. Also, parking will be on site, so there are many pros and the project will be good for the city. The current cons about the project is that there are multiple lots and traffic congestion. He recalled the problem in the past of almost losing control of the port. He stated his support of the project and he requested to be added as a co-maker on the resolution.

Attorney Joel Green, of the Downtown Special Services Division was recognized to speak, per Council member Brantley's request to hear more input.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED TO ALLOW ATTORNEY GREEN TO ADDRESS THE COMMITTEE**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Attorney Green stated he was there on behalf of the Downtown Special Services Division District. He said it was determined that that the proposed move of the ferry would be detrimental. He explained that it would reduce commerce and he felt that moving it would be harmful. He also expressed that the current property where the ferry is located would be enhanced to improve conditions. As far as people getting lost exiting the thruway, he researched the problem and found that signage was poor, so they came up with a plan to improve it, as well as functionality of the ferry.

He went on to speak about the time spent as a city creating the Intermodal Center. He stressed that to reverse that course now, struck him as a reversal of what they tried to establish. He also felt the presence of water taxis would only distract, so the issue would therefore become a matter of efficient transportation. Although the ferry terminal is a private entity, overall, he felt strongly that the current location is where the ferry should stay. He further stressed that they should be doing things to support the downtown business and he didn't feel the concentration of transportation should be broken up.

Council member Holloway emphasized that if Magic Johnson came in to do what he said he would, there wouldn't be any talk of the empty lots. He further stated that the downtown lots are owned by Bridgeport, not the ferry company.

Council member Brantley stated her concern about the ferry boat company. She questioned if there was anyway to have people that will visit the city, get them to the downtown area and accommodate visitors in that regard. Attorney Rizio responded that there was a way. He said they would agree to provide shuttle service. He also clarified that they weren't looking to abandon downtown.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER dePARA MOVED TO ENTER EXHIBIT-2 ITEM 21-09 INTO THE RECORD – *submitted to the city clerk's office***

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

City Attorney Mark Anastasi stated that this wasn't a public hearing, per the persons that were allowed to address the committee. He relayed that if the meeting was going to be open to representatives on this project, then the committee should open it up to the public members present also. Council member dePara stated that he allowed the representatives to speak and give their input for the committee's information. He added that it would also be a good idea to hold a public hearing in the future.

Attorney Rizio summarized that a report was conducted as an overview to the ferry operations. He stated that the company wants to build a state-of-the-art facility to enable them to expand. He pointed out that where the ferry is located now, they can't grow because of the natural impediments effecting the site. So that's why they are looking to move it across the city to allow it to grow. He said they will be able to put (75) cars on site and they will have the ability to get people on and off the highway easier; they will also have the ability to install a second berth. He said they were asking to allow the developer to help Bridgeport grow and continue serving the city. He added that there is no question that where the ferry is located now is not a good location.

Council member dePara commented that there was one obvious physical limitation that will impede growth.

Council member Martinez commented that she felt for the east end, noting that they struggle the same as the east side. She offered her support to the project and as a co-maker on the resolution.

Council member Ayala asked if the monies being funded for the Intermodal Center would have any impact on the ferry operation if it stays where it currently is. Mr. Coleman of OPED said he couldn't speak to a specific dollar. However, he said the Intermodal project has attracted federal dollars.

Council member Ayala said that as a council member in the district where the ferry is currently located, he thought it was a good idea to move it, however, he said he needed some more information to make a decision. He noted that he would abstain from a vote tonight, but overall he was in support of the idea.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER DEPARA MOVED TO ACCEPT CITY ATTORNEY MARK ANASTASI'S LEGAL OPINION EXHIBIT-3 ITEM 21-09 INTO THE RECORD - submitted to the city clerk's office**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

City Attorney Anastasi stated that his legal opinion was submitted and it spoke for itself.
- *the committee members took a few minutes to review the document.*

Council member Ayala asked about the paragraph related to Intermodal Transportation. Attorney Anastasi clarified that as a city council, this will not be a development akin to a storage warehouse; it's a major transportation center tied into rail transportation and bus transportation and the entire downtown area has been a part of that. So while they don't have any influence over some aspects of the project, the committee does have some input. He didn't feel that a decision should be rushed and he thought they should allow time to do due diligence and weigh whether or not the project is in the best interest of the city. He said the Intermodal methodology of transportation is key to the development of Bridgeport and they need to look at the strategic development plan for the city.

Council member Brantley said support of the project should be forthcoming. However, she had a concern about the Bridgeport Port Jefferson matter and if it was still under litigation. Attorney Anastasi said yes, although that matter wasn't directly related to this project. He commented that it might be important to hear from a representative from the Office of Planning & Economic Development.

Council member Curwen asked Attorney Anastasi was representing the city's opinion or his personal opinion regarding this project. Attorney Anastasi alluded to the fact that he was representing the city's opinion, based on acquiring more research relevant to the project.

Council member Curwen recapped that Council member Holloway was only looking for support for the move tonight. He stated that he was willing to table the item for now.

Council member dePara stated that it was important to listen to what the OPED staff had to say. He added that the committee should do their due diligence, and if they chose to go forward after that, then so be it.

Council member Brantley asked when it was decided to file the applications and if the matter was discussed with the 139th District and the NRZ. Attorney Rizio stated that they planned to refile within the next week.

Council member dePara asked to hear from a representative from OPED. Mr. Coleman asked the committee to consider tabling the item to allow his department to gather more research and information. He noted that there are impacts to consider. He further noted that the NRZ was supportive of the project, but the south end may have a different opinion regarding the project. He urged tabling the item until next month.

Council member Brannelly asked Attorney Rizio to display the rendering that showed the proposed site. She also asked about any tax implications. Attorney Rizio point out that the project will be constructed on excess land and there aren't any businesses that will be negatively affected by the project.

Council member dePara asked Mr. Coleman to consolidate the additional information requested and expressed by the committee members. Mr. Coleman acknowledged the request.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA MOVED TO TABLE THE ITEM WITH THE
CAVEAT THAT THE REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE OFFICE OF PLANNING
& ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WILL GATHER PERTINENT INPUT FROM
THE PROPER AGENCIES AND REPORT BACK TO THE COMMITTEE
** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Co-chair dePara called for a break at 7:10 p.m.

Co-chair dePara reconvened the meeting at 7:21 p.m.

04-09 Grant Submission re 2009-2012 State of Connecticut Department of Public Health TB/STD Control Program.

Valerie Sorrentino addressed this item. She stated that this was a 3-year renewal application in the amount of \$187,776.00. There are two components, one of them is for TB control that pays for a case management salary and the other is for the STD program to buy supplies.

Council member dePara asked for a breakdown between the TB and STD programs. Ms. Sorrentino said that information was provided in the packet.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN MOVED TO APPROVE
** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

***Consent calendar**

05-09 Grant Submission re 2009-2010 State of Connecticut Department of Public Health for a Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention – Education Outreach Program.

Valerie Sorrentino stated that this item was for a new grant in the amount of \$92,500.00 to conduct education in schools. The program will be run by Audrey Gaines and her department. They will teach kids lead poisoning prevention and an expert will also come in to educate them on the dangers of lead poisoning.

Council member Curwen asked how much of the grant was going towards salary. Ms. Sorrentino said it would pay a portion of the lead inspector's salary of \$20k to Dr. Cross.

Council member Curwen questioned if an additional \$20k was going to Dr. Cross, what will happen next year if they don't get the grant. Ms. Sorrentino clarified that Dr. Cross only comes into teach the curriculum and then he leaves. He's only a consultant.

Council member Martinez asked if a stipend will be given to the students that are trained. Ms. Sorrentino said they will receive a small stipend. She noted that she will provide more information to the committee.

Council member Brantley asked what will happen with the funds from the program and what it includes. Ms. Sorrentino replied that the funds will pay part of the salary for the expert and another portion will go towards fringe benefits.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED TO APPROVE**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ SECONDED**

Council member Silva asked if only high school seniors will be trained. Ms. Sorrentino said yes. They will be students from the magnum high school. She noted that they are already involved with the training. Council member Silva also asked about liability issues. Ms. Sorrentino said she wasn't sure about liability. Council member dePara requested Ms. Sorrentino to find out that information.

Council member Silva stated that there might be a slight issue with kids training other kids. Ms. Sorrentino clarified that the kids will be supervised.

Council member Brantley asked if the program would continue if was successful. Ms. Sorrentino said yes.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

***Consent calendar**

17-09 A resolution concerning the modification of the development program for **Ref# 125-08** the former Webster School

Council member dePara stated that this item was before the committee previously. It was back before them due to substantive changes made to the resolution. He emphasized that it was important to move forward.

Mr. Coleman distributed the resolution reflecting a slight adjustment.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY MOVED TO ACCEPT THE AMENDMENT TO THE RESOLUTION INTO THE RECORD – *submitted to the city clerk's office***

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Mr. Coleman reviewed the site via slides displayed on the laptop. He explained that the building was located across from the Red Rooster Deli. The city council approved the recommendation for the proposal. He said as they considered the change in the program, he asked the developer not to proceed with Planning & Zoning approval. The proposal was originally constructed and called for 21 to 23 one-bedroom apartments and they also anticipated two retail units in front - *per the rendering submitted*. However, a lot of renovations would have been required. So they closed on June 29 and requested to readjust the program. He noted that Viade Development & Guedes Associates are working in conjunction. They are proposing to create very affordable condominiums that will be reduced from 21-units to 19-units. The units will be priced between \$117k and 150k. The project construction will be lower density and he expected stability would be encouraged through new home ownership. Overall, they are changing the project from rental to condominiums. He recommended approval.

Council member Brantley asked if the units will have appropriate fire escape plans. Mr. Coleman said they will have a sprinkler system in the building and four (4) exits. He explained that they have four exterior staircases and they will have to comply with ADA requirements.

Council member Martinez said she was surprised that they were building condominiums. She referred to the last two paragraphs of the resolution. She asked if what was outlined had anything to do with money. Mr. Coleman replied no. He noted that there will be seventeen (17) two-bedroom units and two (2) one-bedroom units.

Council member Tom McCarthy stated that they have ownership across the street from the proposed and they made them really beautiful condominiums, so he was wholeheartedly in support of the project.

Council member Silva stated that he was originally happy with the retail side of the project, but he was disappointed that that component has been eliminated. He also felt that the pricing for the area was too high. He commented that the price should be more in the range of \$90k-\$95k. He said he also had an issue with the street lights flashing, noting that the retail component gave the project some flair. He repeated that the prices were too high. Attorney Rizio stated that the cost of units will be at market rate.

Council member dePara thought it was a good idea to get the information out that the units will also be available through the helping hand program.

Council member dePara asked about the lighting and how to improve the traffic signals. Attorney Rizio said those matter will be addressed.

Council member Curwen stated he was pro development and in support of the project. He asked if there was any difference in tax generation from the other proposal. Mr. Coleman said it should be viewed in a similar fashion according to the Tax Assessor's guidelines.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN MOVED TO AMEND THE RESOLUTION AS READ AND ENTERED INTO THE RECORD – *submitted to the city clerk's office***

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN MOVED TO APPROVE AS AMENDED**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

***Consent calendar**

18-09 Resolution regarding proposed agreement to fix assessment for certain units within 800 Seaview Avenue.

Mr. Coleman updated the committee on this item. He noted that it was for new construction on the east end. He relayed that the developer Steve Eaton was present, as well as others that will be involved in the project.

He recalled that this was a stalled project and now they were looking to move forward. The units will be prices at affordable rates, noting that the developer will make sacrifices to see the project to fruition. He asked for the committee's support. He displayed photos of the unfinished units and he noted that there will be 54-units. He said the developer already sold eight (8)-units that consist of (5) 3-bedroom units sold at \$265k and (3) 2-bedroom units sold at \$245k. He clarified that new prices were decided upon and would consist of the 2-bedroom units at \$195k and the 3-bedroom units at \$218k.

Mr. Coleman asked the committee to consider whereby the Tax Assessor will fix the assessment for the new owners at \$50.00 per square foot. He stated that the developer has indicated that if the prices were lowered, the assessor would agree to the tax adjustment and down payment assistance would be offered to begin the project.

Mr. Eaton said when they originally started the project, they were looking to create a higher middle class neighborhood, but since the economic climate has changed that the intention has changed. He relayed that the new prices will be \$185k for the 3-bedroom units that will have granite counter tops and hardwood floors and measure 1,500 square feet. The 2-bedroom units will measure 1,200 to 1,300 square feet and will be priced at \$160k. There will also be 3-bedroom handicapped units measuring between 1,300 and 1,400 square feet that will go for \$185k, so drastic price cuts were made overall. He further noted that since the prices dropped, they will now have FAA and CHFA approval.

Council member dePara asked how many empty units were left. Mr. Eaton said there were approximately nine (9-units) empty, this includes the unfinished units that are currently empty.

Council member Brantley asked the number of units left to develop. It was stated that the total build out will be 54-units; 20-units have been constructed and 34-units are remaining to build.

Mr. Eaton expressed that if they get the PILOT Program, it will be strong project to be proud of.

Mr. Coleman clarified that if they received approval for the resolution, they needed to be specific about the prices. He pointed out that the final prices will be incorporated into the contract. He stated that 8-units would be owner-occupied, 12-units would be available for occupancy and 34-units are to be built. He further added that the pricing submitted would be locked in for phase-2, but if the market improves, they may increase the price for phase-3, but the PILOT still remains in place. - *he submitted the amended resolution into the record.*

Council member Curwen asked why they decided on a seven year agreement. Mr. Coleman said it was merely to maintain consistency, in view of the downtown development.

Council member Curwen repeated that although he was pro development, he had a concern about the potential of the original buyer who might sell the unit, wherein, the new owner will pick up any associated changes in assessment. Mr. Coleman clarified that there shouldn't be any negative impact to the new owner.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN MOVED TO AMEND THE ORIGINAL RESOLUTION - *as submitted into the record and to the city clerk's office***
Noted: the amendment was modified beginning where it reads "Further be it Resolved" on the last page of the resolution

**** COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA SECONDED**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CURWEN MOVED TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION AS AMENDED**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ SECONDED**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ MOVED TO ADJOURN**
**** COUNCIL MEMBER BRANTLEY SECONDED**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Graham
Telesco Secretarial Services